

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program

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Quarterly Progress Report

TRAVEL COORIDOR PLANNING INITIATIVE

Statewide Planning's year-long look into travel corridor planning is winding down. This effort was undertaken in cooperation with the RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and the RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). This planning concept emerged in Rhode Island in Transportation 2020 (2001 Update), the State's 20 year ground transportation plan, as a strategy to connect land use and transportation planning as well as mitigate traffic congestion. Specifically, this effort encourages: multi-modal and intermodal analysis of a travel corridor, consideration of "upstream" and "downstream" impacts, regional communication and cooperation, and the consideration of land use as well as transportation solutions to traffic problems. The objectives of this initiative were to define major travel corridors in the state, identify major corridor planning issues, and formulate a vision for each corridor.

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) of the State Planning Council helped to shape this study. Seven major travel corridors of statewide significance were identified. All 39 cities and towns are included in at least one corridor, and some are included in several. In many cases the corridors extend into Massachusetts and/or Connecticut. This was a multi-modal effort and was not confined to highways. Rail, bicycle, pedestrian, ferry, and transit were considered as appropriate. This study included data collection to develop a profile for each major roadway in the corridor and a series of workshops for local planning officials, followed by a series of public workshops that ended in July 2003.

The complete results of this effort will be published as Technical Paper 152 (soon to be available on CD-ROM and on our website). The



Corridor Profiles, Planner Workshop Summaries, Public Workshop Summaries, Land Use Maps, Aerial Photographs, and Vision and Goals document the course of this exercise. A brief Conclusions chapter identifies issues for further study. The vision statements as drafted are the result of a public process with input from professional staff and should not be interpreted as policies of the state. No specific recommendations were developed as part of this Technical Paper. The results of this effort will be used: to formulate objectives, policies, and strategies in the 2004 update of the long range transportation plan; as a platform for more detailed individual corridor studies; to prioritize projects for the Transportation Improvement Program; and to assist communities in making local land use decisions and identifying growth centers.

The public workshop exercise of prioritizing a series of planning issues was undertaken to get a sense within each corridor of what the key issues are, but also to compare the corridors with each other. The chart below shows combined results from all corridors except Interstate 95. During the course of the planner workshops and public workshops, some issues emerged that were beyond the scope of the Travel Corridor Planning Initiative, but nonetheless impact the transportation system and are worthy of further study. These issues include: local property tax, state surplus property, frontage roads, interstate travel, and addition of Route 117 as a corridor of statewide significance.

Transportation

EAST WEST

Cranston, Foster, Glocester, Johnston, North Providence, Providence, Scituate, Smithfield

SOUTH COUNTY

Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Jamestown, Narragansett, New Shoreham, North Kingstown, Richmond, South Kingstown, Westerly

AQUIDNECK ISLAND

Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, Tiverton

EAST BAY

Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Warren

WEST BAY

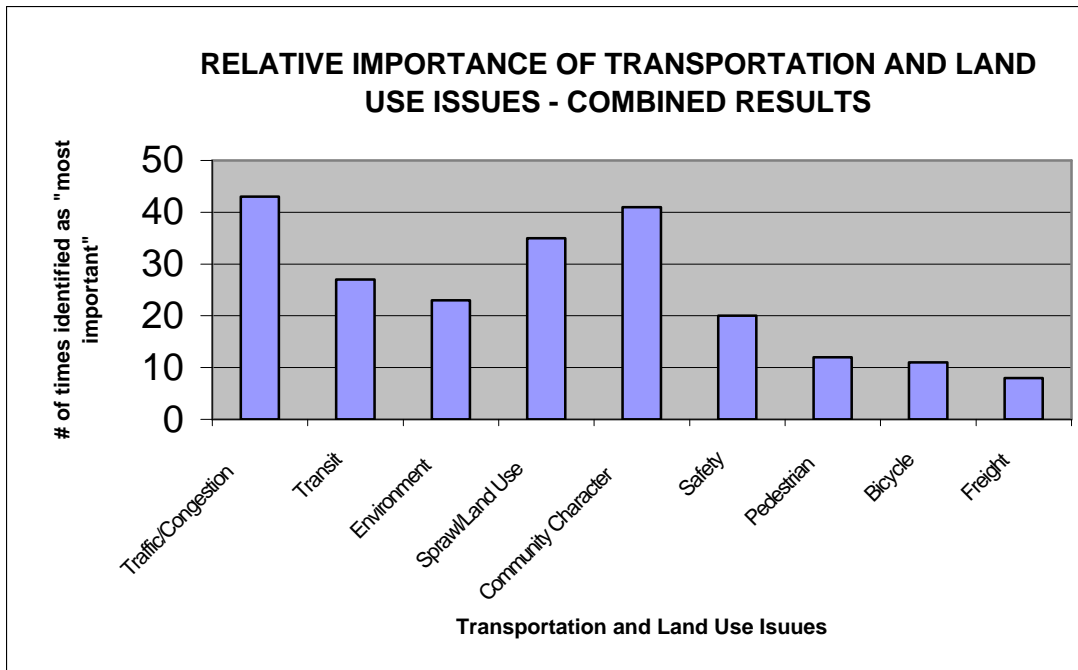
Cranston, East Greenwich, Exeter, Narragansett, North Kingstown, Providence, South Kingstown, Warwick, West Warwick

BLACKSTONE VALLEY

Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Providence, Smithfield, Woonsocket

INTERSTATE 95

Statewide study area



Transportation

Innovative Transportation Financing Approved

The State Planning Council has approved amendments to the Ground Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) authorizing the State's utilization of so-called "GARVEE" bond financing to accelerate five major transportation infrastructure projects: completion of the I-195 relocation project in Providence, the Quonset Access



Road, the Freight Rail Improvement project, and replacement of the Washington and the Sakonnet River bridges. GARVEE is an acronym for Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle. This technique is being used

successfully by other states to finance major capital projects. The \$650 million funding package will rely upon long-term bonds backed by the State's share of future federal transportation funds.

Unlike conventional financing, the debt service is reimbursable by federal funds. The current low interest rates make this an attractive option. Prior to this action, the Sakonnet River Bridge, Phase 2 of the Quonset Access Road, and the remainder of the FRIP project were unfunded. For the plan amendment see: <http://www.planning.ri.gov/gtp/default.htm> For the TIP amendment see: <http://www.planning.ri.gov/tip/default.htm>

Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) Released

The long awaited 2000 CTPP Part I containing Data by Place of Residence for Rhode Island has been released. Please contact Michael Moan or Mark Brown for more information.

Walkable Communities Workshop Program:

The Statewide Planning Program has been selected by the National Center for Bicycling and Walking as one of twelve Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) in the nation to host their Walkable Community workshop program. The purpose of the workshops, which will include professionals in the fields of planning, engineering, law enforcement, public health, education as well as elected officials and citizens in eight local communities, is to make neighborhoods and communities more pedestrian-friendly. The program entails a series of eight, half-day workshops in communities around the state next spring. The workshop presenters are the team of expert trainers from the National Center for Bicycling and Walking.



The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC):

- Accepted at its July meeting the five recommendations of the Study and Development Subcommittee, which included moving some projects to the Highway and Pavement Management categories while leaving a project in Study and Development.
- The TAC conducted a public hearing and approved the proposed TIP and Plan amendments for GARVEE financing for projects at its August meeting.
- At its September meeting, the TAC approved the recommendations of the Study and Development Committee and recommended that one project be added to the sidewalk list of the TIP Highway Program.

Committee Actions

STATE PLANNING COUNCIL

The Council met in August and September. They received a briefing on a paper: *How to Prepare and Maintain a State Guide Plan Element*. The Council took the following actions

- Adopted an amendment to the *Transportation Improvement Program and the Ground Transportation Plan* to provide for GARVEE financing of major projects.
- Adopted the FFY 2004 Update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Adopted an amendment to Handbook 16: The Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan to provide for an Affordable Housing Plan component of the Housing Element.
- Adopted a Regulatory Agenda for the balance of the calendar year.
- Appointed an Advisory Committee for the update of the Forestry Resources Management Plan

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Committee met in August and September. The Committee received briefings on the Airport Systems Plan, the update to the Housing Data Base, and the update of the State Land Use Policies and Plan. Committee took the following actions:

- Recommended Council approval of an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program and the Ground Transportation Plan to provide for GARVEE financing of major projects
- Recommended approval of the FFY 2004 Update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Recommended Council approval of an amendment to Handbook 16: The Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan to provide for an Affordable Housing Plan component of the Housing Element.

GROWTH PLANNING COUNCIL

The Governor's Growth Planning Council is charged with examining the impacts of the state's current development patterns, evaluating the effect of state programs on sustainable development, recommending means to encourage sustainable development and fostering partnerships to build local capacity to manage growth. Statewide Planning is providing staff support to the Council.

The Council cancelled its September meeting as staff continued to explore ways to implement the Growth Centers strategy. Efforts focused on identifying communities that were working on projects that appeared to meet the criteria of growth centers. These projects may be proposed to the Council as pilot projects for which state agency resources could be prioritized. These pilot projects may be presented to the Council at an interim meeting prior to their next scheduled meeting in December.

Housing and Human Services

The June meeting of the Children's Cabinet marked the final meeting where Statewide Planning provided staff support. Staff reductions have forced us to limit our support to such activities. Statewide Planning has provided support since the inception of the Children's Cabinet and staff have made major contributions to a number of the Cabinet's initiatives. Beginning with the September meeting staff support will be provided by the Director's Office of the Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Staff has worked closely with Rhode Island Housing and staff of the State Housing Appeals Board in developing amendments to the regulations governing the Comprehensive Planning Program to provide for affordable housing plans. The *Low and Moderate Income Housing Act* provides a process for expedited review of subsidized housing proposals. It also allows communities to limit those projects to types and locations that conform to their plans to reach a threshold of ten percent affordable housing units.

The amendments to Handbook 16: *The Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan* is meant to provide guidance on the requirements of these optional components of the local comprehensive plan. The amendments were approved by the State Planning Council in September and are available on the agency's web site.



Local Comprehensive Plans

Letters reminding communities about the upcoming expiration of their approved Comprehensive Community Plans were sent to Cumberland, East Greenwich, Pawtucket, Scituate, and Westerly. In response, Five-Year Updates have been received from Cumberland, East Greenwich, Pawtucket, and Scituate.

State agency comments regarding their Five-Year Updates were forwarded to the communities of Bristol, Jamestown, Middletown, and Newport. Revisions were received and comments returned regarding the initial Comprehensive Community Plans for Little Compton and Warren. Three comprehensive plan amendments were received from East Greenwich (EG 03-1, EG 03-2 & EG 03-3) and one from Westerly (WES 03-1).

The most significant accomplishment this quarter involving the Comprehensive Plans Section was the adoption by the State Planning Council of guidelines for the preparation of "affordable housing plans" with regards to the *Low & Moderate Income Housing Act*.

Following considerable discussion between the staffs of Statewide Planning and RI Housing, regulations were adopted as an amendment to the Housing Element section of the Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan. Input had also been received from local government officials in Cumberland and South Kingstown who had prepared draft "affordable housing plans".

It is important that municipalities recognize two aspects to these "affordable housing plans". First, they are NOT required, but rather are at the discretion of the city or town. Second, they will NOT prevent a developer from requesting an expedited review of their affordable housing project. Instead, it is intended to provide developers with guidance concerning the locality's preferences on size, type, location, and technique.

Statewide Planning is working closely with Grow Smart Rhode Island and Rhode Island Housing on a training program for local officials on the subject of affordable housing. The first training session is scheduled for October.

Land Use

During the past quarter the Land Use Group has worked on updates of three state guide plans, supported several projects of other state agencies and also provided technical assistance to municipalities.

Regarding our major project, the *State Land Use Policies and Plan (SGP 121)*, we began individual interviews of the members of the Technical Committee, the State Planning Council as well as municipal planning directors. On September 5th we made a progress report to the Technical Committee on development of the plans visions, overarching goals and short and long-term objectives and strategies.

In coordination with DEM, we have begun an update of the *Forest Resources Management Plan (SGP 161)*.



As staff to the Rivers Council, we have assisted in finalizing some key amendments and an update of the *Rhode Island Rivers Policy and Classification Plan (SGP 162)*.



Land Use staff served as staff or committee reviewers for the R.I. Greenways Program Land Acquisition and Development grants and the Non-Point Source Management grants.

Staff has provided technical assistance to Washington County Regional Planning and the Town of Hopkinton in comprehensive planning and a rezoning study of a highway interchange, Exit 1 on Rte. 95.

Staff has conducted several follow-up reviews on Water Supply Management Plans as well as reviews of Community Comprehensive Plans.

RI Census

The 2003 edition of the *Housing Data Base* will be available on Statewide Planning's website by mid-October 2003. The fourth update of this publication results from the availability of data from the 2000 census. Several changes in the 2000 census afford the opportunity to present new data sets and information previously not recorded in past decennial censuses.

Perhaps the most controversial change incorporated in the 2000 census was the opportunity for respondents to select multiple categories to identify race. Persons of mixed parentage were able to identify themselves as multiracial, and to denote specific racial categories to define their lineage. Even the terminology describing race and ethnicity used in the 2000 census was revised to conform with contemporary nomenclature.

New data sets for the 2003 edition of the *Housing Data Base* include Families with Children Under 18 Years of Age by Living Arrangement and Employment Status of Parent(s), Unmarried Partner Households, Grandparents as Caregivers, Radon Levels, Rhode Island Farms and Farmland, and Housing Market Demand. The *Data Base* also includes data gathered by state agencies.

Logo of the United States Census 2000



Economic Development

This quarter, the Economic Development Section concentrated on producing the 2003 *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Report*. This report gave a review of economic conditions in Rhode Island as compared to the other New England states, discussed the CEDS project solicitation, and presented this year's Priority Project List, giving financing sources and State Guide Plan policies implemented by each project. The Priority Project list contained 14 construction projects and three planning or technical assistance projects. In September, the Technical Committee and the State Planning Council endorsed

the report at their respective meetings. Submission of the *Annual Report* to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and a yearly self-evaluation of the CEDS program are requirements of the planning grant under which the Economic Development Section of Statewide Planning operates.

Also in September, Rhode Island's representative on the Outer Continental Shelf Policy Committee, Bruce Vild of the Economic Development Section staff, completed the final report of a subcommittee he chaired addressing issues of education and outreach in the federal offshore oil and gas

development program. This report is expected to be formally endorsed by the Policy Committee at its next meeting.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

- 67 proposals received this quarter
- 66 proposals acted on by staff and reviewing agencies (closed)
- 1 proposal remains pending

Review of EDC projects

- 1 proposal pending from last quarter
- 6 proposals received this quarter
- 3 proposals acted on by staff and reviewing agencies (closed)
- 4 proposals remain pending

Rhode Island Geographic Information System

A second draft of a document entitled "RIGIS Guidelines and Standards for Digital Parcel Data Sets for Use in a GIS" was completed and posted on the Planning Web site, www.planning.ri.gov and on the RIGIS data distribution site www.edc.uri.edu for review by all parties with interests in GIS and fields related to municipal parcel maps and land records systems. Input from comments received during the review period ending on September 15 have been incorporated in the document. It will be presented to the RIGIS Executive Committee for comment and formulation of a final draft in October. It is anticipated that a final review will result in acceptance by the RIGIS Executive Committee as a standard this year. The document is intended to offer guidance to cities and towns in digitizing existing parcel or assessor's maps for use in a municipal geographic information system.

The RIGIS coordinator participated in the Urban and Regional Information System Association (URISA) Street Smart Conference held in Providence in August. A

national audience was on hand and was impressed with advances demonstrated by Rhode Island in road naming and addressing system management. The RIGIS coordinator also worked with the Northeast Arc Users Group in preparation for that organization's annual conference on GIS to be held in Newport in November of this year. The GIS Analyst attended the annual ESRI GIS Conference in San Diego in July.

Continuing GIS analysis and mapping support was provided to the Land Use Section and the Transportation section of Statewide Planning. The Land Use section will be updating the state's land use plan and using GIS for both analysis of changes and illustrative proposes. A proposal has been submitted to use satellite remote sensing technology for this effort.

The RIDOT/RIGIS project to obtain new (spring of 2003) orthophotography for the state is preceding with the review and acceptance of proof prints for the digital aerial photography obtained by the RIDOT's consultant in April of this year. Statewide Planning GIS staff worked directly with RIDOT in exploring data compression software alternatives

for packaging these images for distribution through the RIGIS. The product consisting of digital orthophotos of the state will be delivered to RIDOT this fall. It is expected to be available to the public through the RIGIS data distribution system before the end of the year.

A release of new data to the RIGIS database effective September 15 was announced. The data package consists of Census, Coastal Resources, Economic, Public Safety, Geology, Hydrology, Open Space and Transportation information for use with GIS software. A complete listing of the data can be found in the RIGIS section of www.planning.ri.gov. The updated data is available on CDROM from the RIGIS Coordinator at Statewide Planning, and is expected to be available at www.edc.uri.edu/rigis.htm later this fall.

During the reporting period, the GIS section provided support to the RI Fiscal Fitness Team, The RI Emergency Management Agency, and several Rhode Island cities and towns.

GRAPHICS

During the months of July, August and September 161 aerial photographs and/or maps were loaned to 27 state agencies, local governments, and private parties.

Graphics work was provided to the Office of Personnel, the Office of Municipal Affairs, The Building Commissioner's Office, the Office of Library Services and the Division of Human Resources.



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WEB SITE UPDATE (www.planning.ri.gov)

Work on the Statewide Planning Program's website this quarter included:

- positing of the East Greenwich, and Scituate Comprehensive Plans for Review.
- posting of the Ground Transportation Plan addendum, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2003-2004 amendments and information relating to the Travel Corridor Workshops.
- posting of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Project Priority List.
- posting of How to Prepare and Maintain a State Guide Plan Element.
- Posting of the Handbook on the Local Comprehensive (Handbook 16) 2003 Update
- posting of the RIGIS Data 2003 updates
- creation of a committees calendar with links to State Planning Council, Technical Committee, Rivers Council, Greenways Council, Growth Planning Council, and Transportation Advisory Committee agendas.

Web support was also provided to the Information Resource Management Board web site.

STAFF NEWS

Alvin Johnson, Assistant Chief for Housing and Human Services, retired from state service in August. Al has twenty seven years of service and was well respected for his knowledge of the human services delivery system. Beginning his state career in the Policy Office of Governor Garrahy, Al brought with him a wealth of experience from the United Way and local neighborhood organizations. He quickly adapted those skills to addressing issues that faced the state in those areas that most directly touch the citizenry. Al's insights found their way into policy initiatives in the areas of housing and children services to name a few. Colleagues found Al to be a professional with a cool head and a warm heart. His friends at Statewide Planning learned from Al that we can do serious work without being serious all the time.

Pat Chorney, Statewide Planning's Intergovernmental Review Coordinator, retired in July. Pat was on part-time loan to us from OLIS. Prior to these assignments, Pat had a long and successful career with the Office of Municipal Affairs and formerly the Department of Community Affairs helping local housing authorities and clients deal with the variety of housing assistance programs. Pat leaves state service looking forward to enjoying her home in Narragansett and doing some volunteer work.
